

Recycling Audit of Residential Side of Campus

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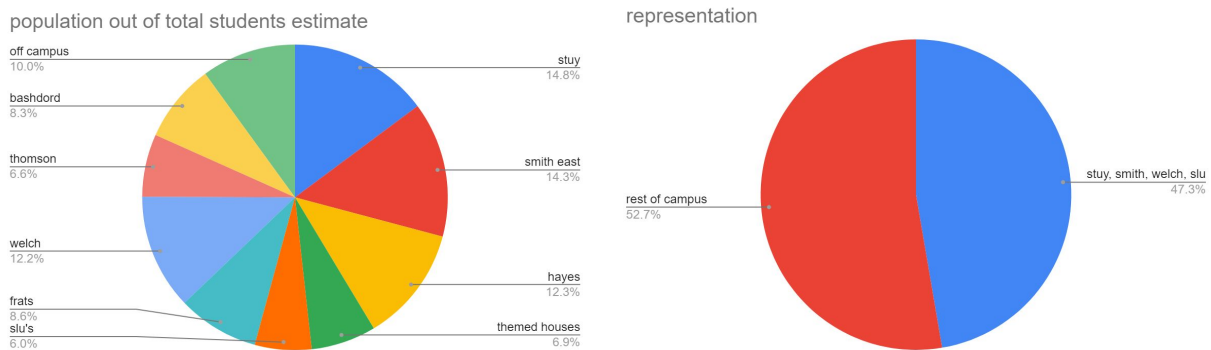
Fall 2019

Summary

For my project I conducted a recycling audit of residential side of campus. After sorting through, organizing, and recording data it was found that over 50% of the recycling by both number and weight were properly recycled. However, the rest that was not recyclable was overwhelmingly food contaminated recycling. This causes a problem since it contaminated items will often get all over the bag making the entire bag completely unrecyclable. After brainstorming ideas to help solve this issue a proposal was started to suggest these ideas. These ideas include an exchange between cleaned recyclables and items in T-Store or regular floor recycling competitions with a prize of a pizza party. These will intensify students to recycle properly.

Methods and Results

The first step to to audit was to determine which dorms to use. This was determined by finding the exact number of beds in each dorm and picking the 2 largest sophomore and up dorms, the largest freshman dorm, and the slus. The data for this can be found in the graph below.



Once the dorms were selected Meg Edwards and I contacted ABM and B&G to get help finding an area to sort through the recycling and to have ABM set some recycling bags aside for us. From there we sorted through each bag--which was marked for which dorm it was from-- to find data showing what types of things were being recycled. The items were divided up into six categories:

- Recyclable Paper
- Recyclable Plastic

-Recyclable Metal/Glass

-Non-Recyclable Plastic

-Food Contaminated Items

-Non-Recyclable items

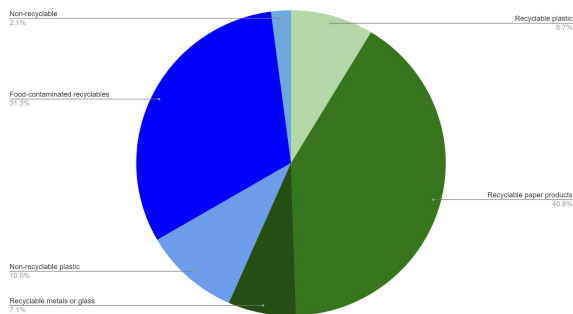
Data was recorded for per dorm by both number and weight. After all the data was collected in an excel sheet it was organized and analyzed. The following data shows the results.

Recycling Data for Dorms					
Total weight of those items per dorm (g? lb?)					
Dorm	Recyclable plastic	Recyclable paper products	Recyclable metals or glass	Non-recyclable plastic	Food-contaminated recyclables
Smith	less thsn 1lb	less then 1lb	less then 1lb	less then 1lb	1.5lb
Stuy	2lb	21lb	1.5lb	less than 1lb	4.5lb
Welch	less than 1lb	1.9lb	.9lb	less than 1lb	3lb
SLU's	.8lb	4lb	1lb	less than 1lb	3lb

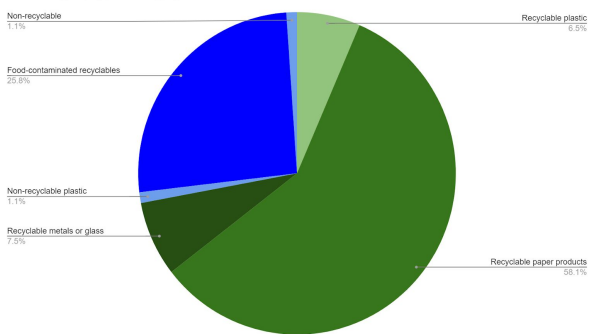
Recycling Data for Dorms					
Total weight of those items per dorm (g? lb?)					
Dorm	Recyclable plastic	Recyclable paper products	Recyclable metals or glass	Non-recyclable plastic	Food-contaminated recyclables
Smith	16	33	5	3	28
Stuy	11	140	27	25	56
Welch	6	24	2	3	86
SLU's	17	39	7	27	11

Dorm	Most by number	Most by weight	2nd most in number	2nd most by weight
Smith	Recycable paper products	Food contaminated recyclables	Food contaminated recyclables	too small
Stuy	Recycable paper products	Recycable paper products	Food contaminated recyclables	Food contaminated recyclables
Welch	Food contaminated recyclables	Food contaminated recyclables	Food contaminated recyclables	Recycable paper products
Slu	Recycable paper products	Recycable paper products	Non-recycable plastics	Food contaminated recyclables

Total number of items by category



Total weight (lb) per category



This data clearly shows that the students recycle mostly paper. Over half the time they recycle properly as well. However, of the items that are not recycable that are put in the recycling the overwhelming majority of the non recycables were food contaminated recyclables. This means items that are normally recycable cannot be recycled due to all the food on them. On top of that they contaminate that whole bag making it hard to recycle much of anything.

Some lovely pictures of things people tried to recycle:



Recommendations:

Educational signage has been done in the past and is not effective. The best way to get people to do what you want is to give them an incentive. For this reason I am now working on a proposal for two incentive based ideas.

1. An exchange program. This would allow students to bring in cleaned out recyclables (excluding paper) to the T-Store (the on-campus convenience store) and exchange it directly for items in T-Store. It would work as an equivalent exchange. Each item will have a direct exchange rate. For example a student can bring in a bag full of clean plastic water bottles and get a free candy bar. I have suggested this idea to other students and each one says they would participate in this program if it was implemented.
2. A rewards system. Throughout the month recyclables are collected and recorded per floor and slu. This would work as a contest. At the end of the month the floor from each dorm, and the slu with the most clean recyclables will be rewarded with a free pizza party. The party will be held with each group all together. So for example if the 3rd floor of Stuy, the 1st floor of Smith, the 2nd floor of Welch, HOLD, and the 1st floor of Bashford all have the most recycling for their dorms then they would all have a huge pizza party together. This not only would allow a reward for recycling but also allow more student interaction and foster new friendships among students.

Once I have written proposals for these two ideas I will send them to the proper people. I hope to have this done by the end of winter break so one of these can be implemented next semester. So look forward to that.

Contacts

Meg Edwards helped write the proposal for the audit and help actually sort the recycling. Email: mmedwards@owu.edu.

Edward Pullen is the regional manager of ABM and collected recyclables from the dorms for us to use. Email: Edward.pullen@abm.com.

John Krygier is the advisor of the class and helped me figure out the different incentive ideas. Email: jbkrygier@owu.edu.